

# **FEATURING BEST PRACTICES OF STATE AGENCIES AND INSTITUTIONS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA**

## **Streamlining Verification Procedures Financial Aid Quality Assurance Model**

**Wytheville Community College**  
implemented this best practice  
in July 1996

*Qualifying under the  
Best Practices catalogue*

?????3 Provide Capabilities  
33 Provide administrative support services  
332 Provide electronic information systems

### **Best Practice Summary (how it works, how you measure it)**

Wytheville Community College (WCC) participates in a special partnership with the Department of Education, Quality Assurance, in which the college makes a commitment to continuous improvement for services to students.

Collecting student data to verify items that students report on their financial aid form is a requirement for the Title IV Financial Aid program. At the beginning of this practice, a study of the flow of paper through the Financial Aid Office, "The Paper Chase," was conducted. Forms were collected from all students for Adjusted Gross Income, U. S. Taxes Paid, Number in Household, Number in College, Dependency/Independence Forms, Earned Income Credit, and Tax Filing Status. Since WCC normally has about 1,350 students apply for financial aid, WCC was requesting about 15-18 pieces of paper per student, for a total of approximately 24,000 pieces of paper. In addition, each student would receive at least one letter asking for information

and perhaps as many as six with an average of three per student. That totaled over 28,000 pieces of paper and mailing an average of three letters per student. This did not count the amount of time filing and processing the paper.

After the investigation was completed, it was decided to reduce the verification requirements and only have first year students go through the verification process. Second year students would only be verified if they were selected by the Department of Education or if there appeared to be conflicting data on the application.

## **Impact on the Process Organizational Performance (OUTCOMES)**

The net results were that verification process was reduced about 40 percent to save time and money while improving services to all students. Not having to handle over 11,000 pieces of student data not only improved the student outcomes of having their financial aid award completed sooner, but it also improved staff morale in being able to spend their time more productively.

In addition, there were several other positive outcomes with the practice. "The Paper Chase" identified two steps in the process which could be eliminated. "The Paper Chase" has been used effectively to explain the complicated financial aid process to students, faculty, staff, and parents.

The Quality Assurance Program has been successful in identifying the problem, finding solutions, and implementing the changes.

## **Best Practice Qualification**

The practice was chosen as a "Best Practice" because of savings in time and money. The ultimate goal of providing better and more efficient services to students was achieved.

## **For Additional Information**

[Wytheville Community College](#)  
1000 East Main Street  
Wytheville, VA 24382

Dr. Gail S. Catron  
(540) 223-4766

[wccatrg@wc.cc.va.us](mailto:wccatrg@wc.cc.va.us)

William M. Dixon, Jr.  
Dean of Administrative and Financial Services  
(540) 223-4762  
[Wcdixob@wc.cc.va.us](mailto:Wcdixob@wc.cc.va.us)